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# The Decorator and Furnisher.

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THE Columbian Exposition will naturally mark an era in the progress of the house furnishing business, and the furniture therein exhibited will illustrate the present high level of artistic improvement in our interiors, and the increasing beauty of contemporary domestic furnishings. Not only will the progress of furniture be exhibited from an artistic standpoint, but from an economic standpoint also. Twenty years ago five thousand dollars would very poorly furnish a large house, and then only with articles of comparative ugliness; but to-day a small sum will command a much more complete appointment of the same house—and that, too, in a manner formerly unthought of.

The exhibition of American-made furniture will prove that if our products do not outrank those of Europe, the designer, manufacturer and distributor have gone hand in hand in the work of improvement, until to-day we manufacture furniture as elegantly made, and as artistically designed as that of any other country in the world. Never before in the world's history was competition in every calling and pursuit as fierce as now, and, not only in the matter of furniture, but in dress, food and residence, the economic movement of the present age is equally noticeable. The rapid accumulation of wealth permits of building and furnishing our homes on more substantial and luxurious lines than heretofore, and the refinement of modern times forbids the retrogression to the state of semi-barbarism in our surroundings that prevailed until within a comparatively recent period. Furniture making is one of the advancing industries of the world, and if it does not already occupy a position in the front ranks of the age, it is very dangerously near the head of the column, and is still marching on.

SPEAKING of the Columbian Exposition naturally reminds us of the coming New York Furniture Exposition. As a fresh opportunity for that close relationship between buyer and manufacturer, on which the well being of the trade depends, the exposition idea has proven, by former expositions held in this city, has taken firm root in our midst, and the method of making sales semi-annually is rapidly growing, and is certain to prove one of the agencies that will largely increase both our domestic and export trade. In the export trade America is still an infant, but the exposition idea is a direct incentive to our foreign neighbors to come to New York to make their selection and purchases.

The manufacturers who have goods that can enter favorably into competition with similar lines have had substantial reason to be satisfied with exhibiting their goods semi-annually in New York. There are those who decry the utility of the exhibitions, but the man that possesses alertness, activity, prudence, boldness and a thorough knowledge of his business will never have any cause to complain of having placed his goods on exhibition. Manufacturers of this description, with each recurring exhibition, exhibit a much larger line of goods than they did before, for they are fully persuaded that no means can be employed to sell a good article better than through the exposition plan.

THE idea of selling furniture by means of photographs seems at first sight to be desirable on account of its extreme simplicity and convenience, but it is well known that a photograph cannot be made to show the finish of any piece of furniture, or the quality of the material. Some manufacturers have tried the plan of establishing local salesrooms in the larger cities, but the great drawback was the wide range of territory over which such salesrooms were scattered, and the loss of time and difficulty of comparison through their separation. The only perfect solution of the problem lay in getting all the lines as closely together as possible, so that it is possible for the buyer to accomplish in a few days, and at comparatively little expense what would have taken weeks of his time, with a heavy outlay of money.

Not only on the score of convenience and economy are expositions desirable, but on account of the great opportunity they give for manufacturers to come into personal contact with buyers, and thus obtain a critical opinion of their goods, which is a matter of equal moment. The retail dealers who come into contact personally with their customers are the best judges of what they can sell. The manufacturer can make up samples of what he thinks will sell, and then, through the agency of the exposition, he can show his samples before a company of buyers, and if his lines require changes, his errors are confined to a few samples he has made up, and can be easily and inexpensively remedied; thus, in no other way, and under no other conditions can a manufacturer so readily feel the pulse of the market.

The forthcoming exposition in this city in July will be a most interesting exhibit of tastefully designed and rapid selling furniture, and will be full of profitable specialties. There will be many lines of parlor suites, bedsteads and chamber suites, dining-room furniture, brass and onyx goods, desks, cabinets, chiffoniers, tastefully designed tables, fancy rockers, and a thousand and one examples of the prosperity and popularity of domestic furnishing.

AMONG the list of summer furnishings provided by our manufacturers, bamboo furniture holds a prominent place.

Bamboo is truly a wonderful material, and nothing can be more artistic and desirable for summer furnishings than furniture of this material. Its almost universal use in the East has suggested its utility to our own manufacturers, and its use is becoming daily more widespread. Cabinets, beds, chairs, hat-stands, gong stands, newspaper racks, fancy cabinets, music stands, tables, flower stands, screens, etc., are produced in bamboo. work, and the manufactured articles are characterized by admirable qualities of lightness, artistic grace and utility. For exquisite daintiness and beauty of outline, it is the furniture *par excellence* for the summer cottage, and a few pieces will at once create a comfortable, reposeful and artistic apartment.

BRASS and iron bedsteads are the rage of the hour. They are peculiarly adapted to this country for many reasons, but more especially for their sanitary qualities. In point of workmanship, finish and design, as well as durability, brass beds will compare favorably with the most ornamental patterns constructed in wood. These beds are heavily lacquered to prevent the metal from tarnishing, and it is only necessary to keep them free from dust and damp to preserve their lustre.

We will show in our July issue designs of brass beds that are ideals of coolness and comfort. A single brass bedstead will show a canopy formed by drapery, over the head of the bed, as by means of such drapery the severe lines of the metal are

softened, and by using silkoline or cretonne, which costs but little, we create inexpensive and beautiful draperies.

A twin bed will be shown with a wide spreading canopy of drapery over the head of the beds. There will also be a divan or sofa in the Empire style, placed at the foot of the bed, a sort of half-way house to the beds themselves. The drapery, as well as the covering and pillows may be of silk or cretonne, with a floral pattern on, say a cream ground. The walls of the apartment should be covered with paper with a floral pattern to match the cretonne. The other furnishings of the room may be in bamboo, and the room decorated in a manner that will cause the sleepiest eyes to waken with pleasure.

NOTHING could have been prettier or more spring-like than the table which a Parisian hostess arranged with her own hands for an informal little dinner which she gave during Lent. When we entered the dining-room she asked us laughingly whether she would not be able to make a living as a florist; for indeed none else than a person endowed with the most refined of tastes could have devised anything quite as lovely as was to be seen there on that night. No heavy gold or silver surtout, no top-heavy épergne loaded with fruit obstructed the view, but on the fine cloth edged with Venetian point were a succession of tiny baskets of spun crystal in which delicate snowdrops nodded their little green-cricketed necks. A narrow white moire ribbon was tied in windmill bows to the handle of each basket and meandered all over the table, caught up now and again with a cluster of pale yellow cowslips and pink periwinkles. To make the illusion of spring more complete, a flight of white and yellow butterflies, fastened to invisible wires, hovered over the flowers, and so true to nature were these velvety insects, trembling and glittering above the table, that our first impression was that they were alive.

THE recent visit of the Emir of Bokhara to St. Petersburg has led to a revival by society there of the old Oriental fashion of "dostorhanes." The "dostorhane" consists in having, on reception days, a table in the drawing-room or boudoir draped with embroidered silk and loaded with gold and crystal dishes and flacons containing bon-bons, like pastries, confections of roses, liqueurs and other toothsome morsels and beverages. This hospitable custom is already being adopted in the salons of the Faubourg St. Germain here, and will, I feel, certainly meet with as much success as did the "zakouska," which also hails from Russia, so completely have Muscovite fashions been adopted in France. The "zakouska" is served on a side table in the dining-room and is composed of caviar, pickled sterlet, barch (a clear soup made of beet roots and hops), in oxydized silver cups, apple salad, etc., etc., kummel and kwass, (native beer), and when the guests file in to dinner they gather around this table in order to make their choice from these various appetizers, before taking their place at the dinner table.

THE present age is nothing if not eclectic, and nothing, we think, can be finer than to revel in the artistic perfection of many times and many places, provided it is done with nineteenth century power and expression. We may appropriate for our reception-room the art of Greece—not exactly the art of the real Greece, but that ideal Greece which is glorified by the intellectuality of the present, after the manner of Alma Tadema, who possesses the rare power of satisfying the desire of the cultivated mind of the present to realize when ancient life was like. We may thus recall the life, the color and customs of Egypt, Athens, or Rome, with an art essentially the product of our own time, and thus, without being pedantly translate, restore, transfigure, with the freshness of modern vital thought, surrounding ourselves with the air of culture, design, learning and beauty. No finer impression can be created than that in which learning and the magic of art, are indissolubly associated. The life of the great Venetians should be the standard of the life of men of wealth and culture to day. By the progress of the world, by the development of transportation, by the expansion of commerce, by the omnipresence of art, by the far-reaching discoveries of science, our life, our surroundings, should be large in design and harmonious in form and color, and our artists should be given the supreme satisfaction of seeing their most poetic creations fulfilled.